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Exploring the La Sal Mountains of Utah

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America is 50 countries bound together by a shared Constitution; each State a subtly different hue of a common colour.

The West Coast businessmen and East Coast liberals care little for the vast tracts of land which compose the majority of their nation. More concerned with projecting their triumphant image to the world, they forget what allows American to maintain its position as the world's only remaining superpower.

But nestled in the centre of this immense continent innumerable small towns craft the character of America. In places like Moab, Utah, a timeless Americana prevails.

Travelbite.co.uk's Chris O'Toole rolls into town for a taste of that everlasting apple pie on an active holiday in the US.

Arches National Park

Middle America beckons. The Main Street of Moab is a scene taken wholesale from the quintessential American movie. The men wear their Stetsons high, tipping them to passing dames, while the womenfolk serve coffee and pie in the numerous diners lining the sides of the dusty desert road.

The famous red rock stretches to the horizon in all directions, sealing the town off from the world and allowing its inhabitants sanctuary from the forces of modernity.

Arriving in town, and being a fan of *Twin Peaks*, it seemed only right to order cherry pie and black coffee as I nipped into one of the seedier looking places while I waited for my guide to arrive.

Both were exquisite, but I fear they may have taken days off my life (no to mention adding inches to my waistline).

But I barely had time to enjoy the ranchers' ambience before I was whisked off to the **Arches National Park** - a highlight of any visit to Utah.

The park is home to over 2,000 sandstone monuments, but by far the most famous - and an icon of the state - is the Delicate Arch. Just a short drive from Moab the red sandstone arches are instantly recognisable, but few would be able to name Utah as their home.



Upon arrival we were told the Delicate Arch was reachable in under an hour on foot as we set out in dazzling sunshine; the sheer rock stretching to the horizon in all directions.

But within moments the weather has turned. Piercing rain ripped through our summer clothing, drenching us to the bone. The weather can be a cruel mistress here, with temperatures varying by up to 40 degrees centigrade between sunshine and starshine.

But just as quickly the sunshine returned. Although not experienced hikers the route is clearly marked, covering just over three miles. We reached the summit in what seemed like gale force winds and marvelled at the view.

This is just one of hundreds of routes in the park, all of which are open to hikers, mountain bikers and even base jumpers - so there really is no excuse not to visit and enjoy the views if you are in town.

Hummer Time

Hiking may be one way to conquer a mountain, sure, but I would suggest doing so in a 6.5 litre engine Hummer is more exciting. Heading over to **Moab Adventure Centre** we picked up our ride and headed for the mountains.

Reaching heights of over 5,000 metres above sea level the Hummers follow, snake-like, through the rock, carrying up to six guests in each. We wend our way around the



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